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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
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INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 3522  
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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 9167  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 3855  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 2087  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1728  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000254

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DEPT FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL-WIDE GENERAL STRIKE WIDELY OBSERVED;  
DISRUPTION OF CANDIDATES FILING FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

REF: KATHMANDU 247

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty, Reasons, 1.4 (b/d).

Parties' General Strike Widely Observed  
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11. (C) The January 26 general strike/closure (bandh) of all of Nepal called by the Parties to protest against the King and the upcoming February 8 municipal elections was widely observed. In Kathmandu and Patan, few vehicles were on the roads and most shops and businesses were closed (although some small family-run shops were open in residential neighborhoods). Protesters threw rocks at vehicles driving on the roads, damaging at least 15. Journalists reported that the Parties' bandh was a success across the country, including in the larger cities of Biratnagar, Pokhara, and Nepalgunj. One Embassy contact reported from Butwal (Rupandehi District in western Nepal) that in his 37 years there, he had "never experienced such a successful general strike." The seven-party alliance organized demonstrations against the municipal elections in most cities and towns. The demonstrations never became large, as police arrested more than 300 party cadre attempting to protest around Nepal. Police had arrested 17 protesters in Kathmandu, 70 in Rajbiraj (Saptari District in eastern Nepal), 35 in Biratnagar (Morang District in Eastern Nepal), 23 in Pokhara (in western Nepal), 49 in Nepalgunj (Banke District in midwestern Nepal), and more in other districts as of 3:00 pm local time. In Pokhara, police reportedly fired bullets at demonstrators, injuring one.

Affecting Candidates Filing For Elections  
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12. (SBU) The Parties scheduled the bandh for January 26 to prevent candidates from filing for the municipal elections scheduled for February 8; January 26 was the deadline for filing (reftel). Radio reports that the number of candidates filing is low; in some municipalities, no candidates have filed. INSEC, a respected Nepali NGO, told Emboff that the seven-party alliance had blockaded the district election office in Birgunj, Parsa District (south central Nepal) so no one could register. Police sources reported that 100 people

gathered at Thimi municipality, Bhaktapur (in Kathmandu Valley), to stop candidates from registering their candidacy (an hour and a half before the deadline, nobody had filed to run for Mayor or Deputy Mayor). HURON, a Nepali human rights organization, reported that the situation in Bhaktapur was tense. Police sources told us that eight candidates had registered for Mayor of Kathmandu and two in Lalitpur. Students were preventing the Election Commission from setting up polling places in schools in two districts, Bara District (south central Nepal) and Siraha District (southeastern Nepal), for fear the Maoists would bomb the polling stations and destroy the schools. INSEC reported that Maoists had threatened the people in Siraha District who support municipal elections.

#### Maoist Violence Continues

13. (C) The Maoists continue to make their presence felt in urban areas by using violence. The Maoists kidnapped Ram Kumar Tharu, who was expected to file to run for mayor of Guleri municipality, west of Nepalgunj (in mid-western Nepal). Maoists also bombed two Village Development Committee buildings north of the ring road in Boudhanilkantha in the Kathmandu Valley on January 25. No one was hurt, although the explosions badly damaged the buildings. INSEC also told us that Maoists bombed a municipality building in Sindhuli District (central Nepal) early in the morning of January 26; no one was harmed, although the building was damaged.

#### Comment

14. (C) The Parties will likely be heartened by the success of their bandh. The continued demonstrations across the country also indicate that their movement could be gaining momentum. The upswell in public support for the demonstrations, combined with the continued Maoist violence and threats, makes it increasingly unlikely that the upcoming elections will prove credible. However, the King as yet shows no signs of postponing them.  
MORIARTY